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U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk announced Monday a \$800,000 federal grant to help fund an engineering study to reconfigure a hazardous interchange at U.S. Route 41 and Illinois Route 176 in Lake Bluff.

Kirk, R-10th, of Highland Park, also discussed proposed federal legislation aimed at lowering gas prices, which some analysts predict could top \$3 a gallon by this summer.

Kirk presented a ceremonial check for \$800,000 to Lake Bluff village officials Monday to fund a Phase 1 engineering study of the proposed Route 41/176 interchange improvement. The money, from the Federal Highway Administration, was part of a 2005 appropriations bill.

Joining Kirk at the event were Kent Street, Lake Bluff village administrator, and Christine Letchinger, newly-elected Lake Bluff village president, and other village officials.

Kirk called the interchange "one of the most complicated and dangerous intersections of the North Shore," an opinion shared by Letchinger.

"The current configuration of this interchange has entry and exit ways that are way too short, sight lines that are substandard and significantly under serves the transportation needs of this area," said Letchinger Monday.

The study will provide detailed engineering designs and cost projections for the interchange and will take approximately a year to complete, said Street. No money has been allocated for project construction, estimated to cost between \$15 and \$20 million.

Street said the study is "a critical next step," and village officials will continue to work with Kirk

and the Illinois Department of Transportation to secure future construction funding.

"Our realistic goal is to have the project completed within the next five to 10 years," said Street.

Kirk also discussed proposed legislation at the federal level which he believes is needed to help lower gasoline prices. Kirk said he supports changes in regulations to end local gas monopolies, legislation that would increase the average fuel economy for cars sold in the United States, and continuing tax credits for hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles.